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CICERO'S AMALTHEUM

BY FRANK GARDNER MOORE

Cicero's desire to imitate the Amaltheum of Atticus first appears in 61 B. C., in the well-known letter on the acquittal of Clodius (1. 16). Atticus had sent him certain epigrammata of his own production: *Epigrammatis tuis, quae in Amaltheo posuisti, contenti erimus, praesertim cum et Thyillus nos reliquerit, et Archias nihil de me scripserit* (§ 15).

The mention of Thyillus and Archias is sufficient evidence that the verses were in Greek. Clearly the statues or busts placed by Atticus in his Amaltheum were to be provided with suitable inscriptions in metrical form. The comparison with those mentioned by Nepos is inevitable. The latter were, of course, in Latin, and Nepos found much to praise in their terseness (Nepos *Att.* 18. 5, 6). He does not imply that Atticus honored any others than statesmen and generals with his *elogia* in four or five verses.¹ It was certainly in this class, rather than as an orator, that Cicero received his place among the statuary of his friend. There is no positive evidence that Atticus' collection of sculptured heroes of Roman history was limited to the Amaltheum, rather than variously disposed about the villa. But, with the certainty that he would place his friend's portrait in a position of honor, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the essential feature of the Amaltheum was an out-of-door gallery of Romans eminent in public life or in warfare.

At all events, Cicero was not merely curious to learn what this feature of Atticus' Epirote estate was. He knows enough of its nature already to desire to reproduce it upon his paternal Arpinas: *Velim ad me scribas, cuius modi sit Ἀμαλθεῖον tuum, quo ornatu, qua τοποθεσίᾳ, et, quae poëmata quasque historias de*

¹That Atticus' metrical *elogia* were at least in circulation among his friends, if not formally published, is the only reasonable inference from the context in which Nepos mentions them, although the reference to *imagines* leaves us in doubt whether the biographer has in mind the original busts or statues, or drawings of some kind in an *édition de luxe*.

'Αμαλθεία *habes, ad me mittas. Lubet mihi facere in Arpinati* (§ 18). In view of the strange conflict of legends gathered about the name of Amalthea, it is not strange that he should ask to know Atticus' literary authorities, whether as a guide in the purchase of statues or reliefs, or merely for his own enlightenment as to what an Amaltheum was, as distinguished from an Academy, a Lyceum, and the other features prescribed by landscape architects for the correct villa—much as the new-fledged country gentleman of today must needs discover pleached walks and all the other lore of the colonial garden. As for the first motive, the question of the sculptures is fully provided for under *quo ornatu*, and we are forced to conclude that the second motive prevailed, but may well assume that something more than mere novelty attracted him to the idea; and the problem does not lose in interest on account of the uncertainty as to just what the Amaltheum of Atticus was.

It has been held,¹ and is still maintained in Pauly-Wissowa, that the name was also given to the entire estate of Atticus near Buthrotum. Certainly it is a striking fact that there is no name for the estate corresponding to *Formianum*, *Arpinas*, and the like. The practice for extra-Italian estates, to be sure, may have differed from the familiar custom, and one must regret the lack of accessible information as to how the Greeks named their country places. Little light is thrown upon the name of Atticus' estate by the commentators on Cicero's *Letters*. Thus Tyrrell:

Amalthea was a villa of Atticus in Epirus, so called from the neighbouring shrine of the nymph Amalthea. It is sometimes called *Amaltheum*. The adjectival form is generally used as in *Tusculanum*, but cf. *Caieta*, above: Att. i. 4. 3.²

Caietam *ornabo*, however, is an inconclusive example, for the name of the town might be used in lieu of the name of the estate, just as Att. 2. 20. 2; *ab Amalthea te non commovebo*, does not prove that Atticus or Cicero would have thought of calling the estate itself Amalthea. Nothing more is involved than a graceful metonymy, as in *Caieta* above.³ That the same figure would give

¹Orelli *Onom.*, after Ernesti; Pape *Eigennamen*; Wernicke in Pauly-Wissowa.

²On Att. i. 13. 1.

³Cf., in i. 13. 1, the playful, and purely figurative, *caesis apud Amaltheam tuam victimis*.

Amaltheum a wider range than "shrine of Amalthea" is obvious, but the single occurrence in Cicero (*Leg.* 2. 7) does not justify the assumption that the entire estate bore that name, and there is no other tangible evidence. All the support to be found for that theory comes from association of the name with Ἀμαλθείας κέρας as applied to rich and well-watered estates or parks. But the passage¹ which is chiefly relied upon makes the Ἀμαλθείας κέρας a τόπος in an ἄλσος; in other words, plainly a limited spot, not the grove or park as a whole. Hence, conceding that the proverbial significance of the term was amply satisfied by the plane groves of Atticus on the banks of the Thyamis,² proof that Amaltheum was equivalent to Villa Abbondanza, or meant to its owner anything more comprehensive than Cicero's Academy at his Tusculanum, is entirely lacking. There can be small doubt that it was but one feature, like the Tusculan example just cited, or Hadrian's Canopus at Tivoli.

To the question what the Amaltheum was, various answers have been given—a library,³ a gymnasium,⁴ a museum,⁵ a sanctuary,⁶ a building or room containing the library and portraits of famous Romans with pertinent inscriptions,⁷ the estate itself.⁸ The only detailed discussion of the Amaltheum known to the writer is that of O. E. Schmidt,⁹ who sees in it a garden-house, in form perhaps resembling a small basilica, with a fountain, and wall-paintings depicting scenes from the legends of Amalthea, interpreted by inscribed verses, while busts or statues of distinguished men with *elogia* completed the scheme of decoration. That it was a library rests upon no securer ground than the common fashion of adorning libraries with the busts of eminent men of letters. The only literary man whom we know to have had a place in the

¹ *Duris ap. Athen.* 12. 542: καὶ πλησίον Ἰππωνίου πόλεως ἄλσος τι δέκνυσθαι, κάλλει διάφορον καὶ κατάρβυτον ὑδασιν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ τόπον τινὰ εἶναι καλούμενον Ἀμαλθείας κέρας, δὲ τὸν Γέλωνα κατασκεύασαι.

² Cf. *Leg.* 2. 7.

³ Cf. the revised Stephanus, Nizolius, Liddell and Scott, Lewis and Short.

⁴ Ernesti (or a *diaeta*).

⁵ Liddell and Scott.

⁶ Orelli, Georges (Lewis and Short), the new *Thesaurus*.

⁷ Hofmann *Ausgewählte Briefe*, *ad loc.*, who adds a motive from the κέρας Ἀμαλθείας: "wahrscheinlich um anzudeuten, dass die Lektüre jener Bücher die schönste Nahrung für den Geist sei."

⁸ Ernesti, Tyrrell, Wernicke, *loc. cit.*

⁹ *Neue Jahrbücher* III (1899), pp. 340 ff.

Amaltheum is Cicero himself, and, as we have already seen, it is reasonably certain from what is said of the *epigrammata* that he was honored there as a statesman and savior of the state, not as an orator. The historical air of the place seems to have been one of its distinguishing features, and in view of the picturesque charms mentioned in *Leg.* 2. 7, we may safely infer that it was not a building simply, but a portion of the gardens, distinctively treated, and adorned with rows of statues—a *Sieges-allee* rather than a Bavarian Walhalla. That the scheme of the landscape gardener was completed by at least one graceful structure is highly probable, and here a kind of casino may well have contained a select library, possibly of an historical character. The nymph Amalthea, at least, was not forgotten, and her shrine may have been the only edifice. Minor features, such as *exedrae*, and fountains would scarcely have been omitted. If the important element had been a building, we should have had inquiries from Cicero in regard to the plan and style of the structure, and less emphasis upon the *τοποθεσία*.¹

If the associations of the Amaltheum were mainly with Roman history, one can not help wishing to know whether Atticus found a link between some one of the many Amalthea legends and his historical theme. It is not impossible that he may have accepted the identification of the nymph with the Sibyl of Cumae,² than whom no mythological figure might preside more worthily at a marble gathering of Roman men of action. But nothing can be discovered to make the conjecture more than a mere conjecture, reasonably derived, however, from the probability, that the catholic tastes of Atticus would lead him to draw out all the different suggestions of the name. That his villa lay on the road to Dodona, where the nymph had a cult, would be sufficient excuse for the erection of a new shrine with a certain *interpretatio Romana*, even without assuming the previous existence of an older sanctuary

¹Schmidt's limitation of *τοποθεσία* to idyllic landscapes in the frescoes seems inconclusive (pp. 341 ff.). For if a glowing description of Misenum and Puteoli or the charms of Syracuse (*ad Att.* 1. 13. 5; *Verr.* 4. 117 ff.) was a *τοποθεσία*, the same term might be used in begging a description of his Amaltheum from the owner.

²Suidas 949 Bekker: *Lact. Inst.* 1. 6; *Isid. Orig.* 8. 8. 5: septima Cumana nomine Amalthaea, quae novem libros attulit Tarquinio Prisco; *Serv. on Aen.* vi. 72 makes Amalthea the name of the old woman who came to Tarquin.

on or near his estates. The whole region was full of associations with the legend of Aeneas. Near by was an Ilium and other Trojan names connected with the Helenus story—names which no one would think of accepting, if it were not for the testimony of Varro,¹ who had seen the country—was it on a visit to Atticus?

Returning to Cicero and his desire to have an Amaltheum of his own, after the letter of 61, making inquiries and announcing his wish (1. 16. 18), he writes in the middle of the following year (2. 1. 11), begging Atticus to come and inspect: *Amalthea mea te exspectat et indiget tui*. In April, 59, he acknowledges the receipt of further suggestions: *De Ἀμαλθείᾳ quod me admones, non neglegemus* (2. 7. 5). A visit was really expected, at first at the *Formianum* and then at the *Arpinas* (2. 16. 4), but we have no means of knowing whether Atticus in person aided in planning the Amaltheum. The prooemium to the second book of the *Laws* describes the impressions of Atticus on the occasion of his first visit² to the ancestral home of Cicero. After walking about in the gardens by the Liris the three speakers in the dialogue now come to the small island at the mouth of the lesser stream, the Fibrenus. It is the *Insula Fibreni*, or *Insula Arpinas*, often claimed as the actual birthplace of the orator.³ But nothing can be clearer from the present passage than that the house was not upon this islet, which was a quiet and meditative spot, barely large enough for a palaestra. After Atticus has glowingly described the picturesqueness of the place, Marcus

¹ Serv. on *Aen.* 3. 349: Varro Epiri se fuisse dicit et omnia loca isdem dici nominibus, quae poeta commemorat, se vidisse.

² Cf. 2. 2: antea mirabar . . . cogitabam . . . nunc contra miror.

³ Even Hülsen seems to place the entire Arpinas upon this diminutive island (Pauly-Wissowa)—a view which conflicts with the passage in the *Laws*. Mommsen placed the villa on the site of Isola di Sora (*CIL.* X. 1, p. 558). Schmidt identifies the *Insula Fibreni* with the Carnello island, about a mile above the delta at the confluence (p. 336). But this is to ignore the plain language of *Leg.* 2. 6: statim praecipit in Lirem [sc. Fibrenus]. Hence the islet must have been in the delta, and its gradual disappearance would not be surprising. Too much weight seems to have been given by Schmidt to an isolated fragment of a later book—the suggestion that the speakers return to the Liris. But while 2. 1 appears to promise the conclusion of the discourse at the island—in insula quae est in Fibreno . . . sermoni reliquo demus operam sedentes, it is not safe in an unfinished work to conclude that the promise was literally fulfilled. We are not even sure that the dialogue was completed the same day. Finally the spot which the speakers are leaving in the fragment from the fifth book is a young plantation, and deficient in shade—no mention of island or Fibrenus.

remarks that the Thyamis must be in no way inferior, and Quintus adds: *Est ita, ut dicis; cave enim putes Attici nostri Amalthio platanisque illis quicquam esse praeclarius*. The point of comparison is not between the whole Arpinas and the entire estate of Atticus in Epirus. The island in the Fibrenus is compared with a spot by the banks of the Thyamis, the *modica palaestra* upon the island with the *gymnasium*¹ of Atticus—his Amaltheum. In other words, it seems perfectly clear that this island palaestra was the spot where the Amaltheum was to have been reproduced. That it was never actually carried to completion² is to be inferred from the absence of any allusion to the subject in this passage. If the plan had been carried out, it would be difficult to account for the omission of any mention of it in such a context. Cicero in doing the honors of the Arpinas for Atticus, on his first visit, could hardly have failed to mention a feature directly borrowed from the villa in Epirus, and to point out with pride, or with deprecating modesty, his open-air Temple of Fame. Evidently the project was almost forgotten after ten years or more, much as the more famous project for a *Fanum Tulliae*, after filling a large place in the correspondence with Atticus, finally disappears from view.

We may be sure that Cicero's passing interest in the Amaltheum of Atticus had no special connection with the various Amaltheas of conflicting legends, unless possibly the identification with the Cumaean Sibyl appealed to him. What attracted him seems to have been the series of busts or statues of Roman worthies with suitable inscriptions. For this purpose the general form of a palaestra was well suited. If we are right in holding that the plan was abandoned before completion, we may well believe that embarrassment over the question of a statue of himself on his own estate was not without its share in his change of purpose.

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¹ That *gymnasium* and *palaestra* were interchangeable terms is shown by Vitruvius 5. 11; cf. *Att.* 1. 10. 3: *quae tibi palaestra gymnasiique videbuntur esse* (epexegetic-que); cf. *ibid.* 1. 8. 2: *gymnasi xystique*.

² *Ad Att.* 2. 3. 2 is understood by Schmidt as referring to the Amaltheum (p. 343). Atticus in a letter of December, 60, has objected to the small size of the windows in a structure upon which Cyrus the architect was then engaged. It is not improbable that this may have had to do with the Amaltheum, but in a letter written six months after the *Amalthea mea te exspectat*, etc., the allusion is far from certain.